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THE FOURTEEN CLUB.

Senator Geo. R. Malby.

Twenty-three Senators and the Lieutenant-Governor of the State of New York voted for and carried an "amendment" to the Armstrong Committee's bill against insurance perjury by inserting the word "written."

That was bad enough. But fourteen Senators also voted to *recommit the bills with instructions to strike out the enacting clause;* they voted to *stand between perjury and punishment;* so far as they could they voted to *permit "yellow dog" payments to be made out of the people's money and falsely charged in sworn statements to "stationery" or "office expenses."*

These men were Malby, Raines, Allds, Cassidy, Gates, Goodsell, Hill, L'Hommedieu and Smith, nominal Republicans, and Grady, Fitzgerald, Foley, Frawley and Riordan, nominal Democrats. Really all are of the same party.

Why did they so vote? It profited them nothing. The amendment did not pass the Senate.

It was a vote for public advertisement of the fact that these fourteen men are so obliging that they will do anything for anybody—including even persons planning perjury for future commission in the course of scheming robbery.

THE ELSBERG BILL.

The Elsberg bill as it comes to the Mayor and the Governor for approval is not entirely what the city hoped for. But considering the four years' mauling it has had at the hands of hostile interests it has emerged with its symmetry less impaired than was feared.

Even the rent which Grady made does not mar it beyond recovery. And though the separation of the contracts for construction, equipment and operation is made permissible instead of mandatory, the original intent of the bill is in some measure preserved in the provision that the contracts shall be let jointly only when in the opinion of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment the public interest requires it.

This check, in connection with the power given the city to construct, equip, and, as a last recourse, to operate, establishes some little restraint on monopoly.

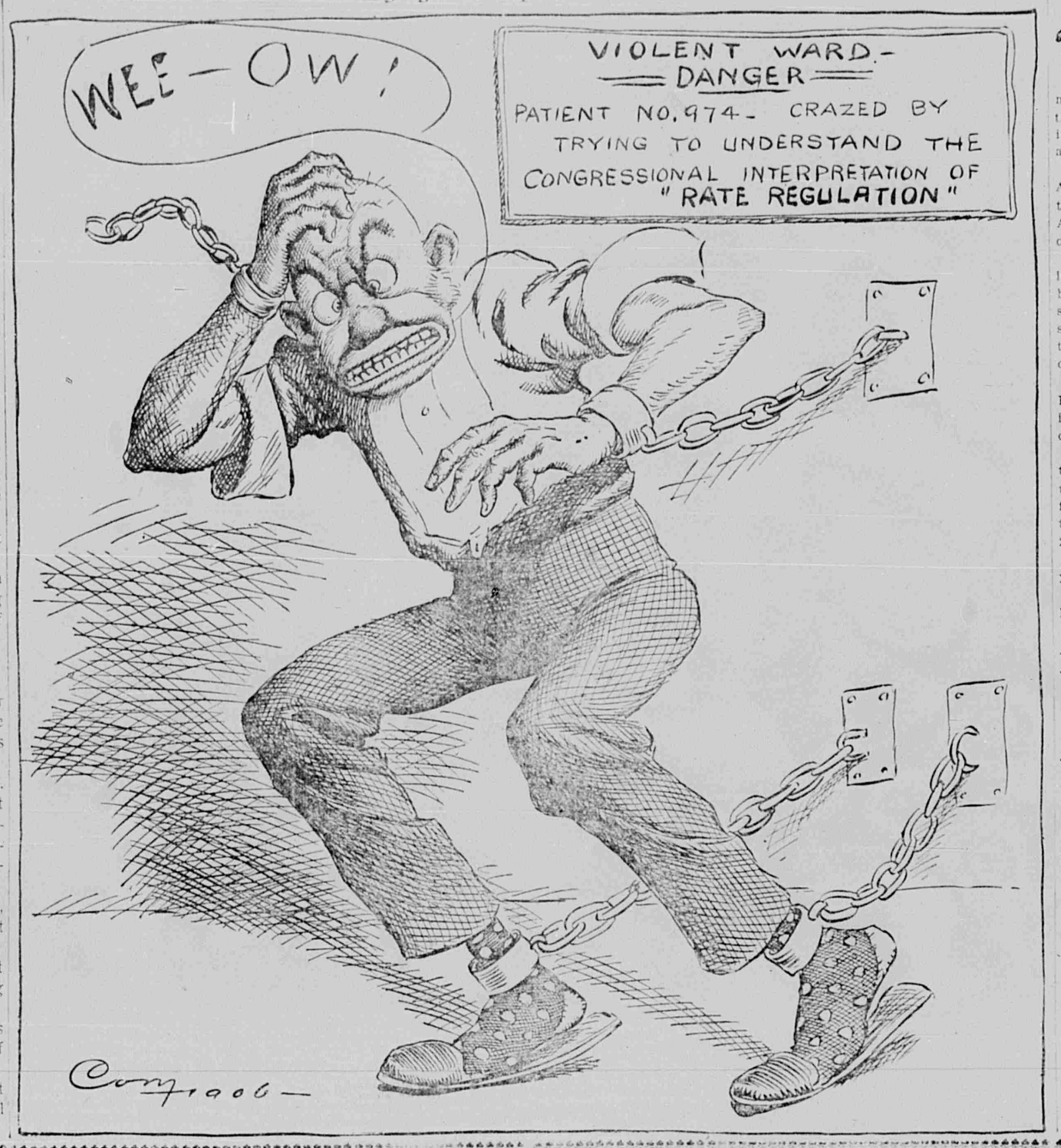
The authorization of the Mayor to fill vacancies in the Rapid-Transit Commission as they occur wipes out the objectionable self-perpetuating feature of that body.

The provision for pipe galleries, the revocation of the Commission's right to grant perpetual franchises and the reduction of the lifetime of leases from seventy-five to forty years represent a considerable gain.

Altogether the bill as it survives after much mutilating and imminent jeopardy of defeat makes an important advance toward a stricter control of subways. It is not the whole loaf, but it is better than no bread.

Hopeless.

By J. Campbell Cory.



Says the HIGH-BROW

By Martin Green.

"THE Barnum & Bailey people," complained the Low-Brow, "advertise 'The Limit,' but they're in wrong. The limit is Andrew Carnegie travelling around the country kissing dames."

"They certainly do make a deceptive punch down there in Atlanta," mused the High-Brow. "It tastes like lemonade, and they serve it in glasses that you could put a dachshund asleep in. Generally people who partake of it for the first time are impelled to climb telegraph poles, roost in the cross-arms and crow.

"Far be it from me to insinuate that they threw any of that punch into Andrew Carnegie. Maybe it was the beauty of the Atlanta women that went to his head. Hobson became eligible to the promiscuous kisser class in Atlanta, and the only intoxicant he falls for is the limpid cadence of his own voice.

"Anyhow, as long as a female don't object to Andrew Carnegie pressing his microbe cage against her map the first time he sees her it is nobody's business but her own, but if he is going to enter the kisser stakes as a consistent performer he ought to get his germ-sifters baked. There's a strong sentiment against whiskers nowadays. Look at what they are trying to do to Dowie. It is a significant fact that as soon as Hobson got his whiskers cut he declared himself out of the kissing game and went into politics.

"Speaking of old Dr. Dowie, I doff my lid to him for a game four-flush. His pulse compels my highest admiration. If every honest man was as insistent on having all that is coming to him as Dowie is we'd have a new deal in this country.

"Dowie's success demonstrates that an adult bluff continues to deliver the goods. The people who are throwing the boots into him now waited until they thought he was down and out before they drew back for the first kick. The nearer the bearded old blasphemer approached to Chicago the more they felt like beating it to the woods. They may pin the number 23 on him, but they'll never be able to make him read it."

"At least," suggested the Low-Brow, "Dowie's experience shows that you can't fool all the people all the time."

"On the contrary," declared the High-Brow, "it shows that you don't have to."

HOT GROUNDERS BY BARNES.

3—The Star of Prunty Town.

I.

Y'e kin talk about y'er Taylors, y'er McGinnitys an' sich,
An' of all y'er gran' stan' players, th't kin fi'ld an' bat an' pitch,
But ye havn't got no follers th't kin ekel Deacon Brown—
Him as played at Meth'dist picnics, 'way back thar in Prunty town.

II.

Gosh, but deacon was a slugger! I kin see th't feller yet,
Swipe th' ball, ker-plunk through shortstop, then great snakes, he'd up an' get!
Coat tails flyin', whiskers blowin', givin' lee way to his pride,
An' he'd hit th' ground like sixty, if th' rooters hollered "Slide!"

III.

Deacon used t' be a fielder, an' he'd cover durn nigh all
Of th' gardens in his chasin' fer t' ketch th' dratted ball;
"Mine!" he'd yell, an' gosh a' mighty, how he'd hike around th' lot!
An' he'd nearly alwus git it, if th' blame thing could be got.

IV.

Onct th' umpire sorter riled him—deacon jumped slam into him,
An' his fists began a poundin', Biff! Biff! Biff! an' Bim! Bim! Bim!
Sufferin' hitchin' posts, sich doins! but th' deacon had last crack,
An' he made th't licked umpire take his fool decision back.

V.

Deacon's long been with th' angels—some folks say he ain't, I know—
But I'm here to do some bettin' 'gainst his bein' down below:
He played square in ball an' prayin', an' he done both mighty fine,
An' I know th't Gabriel told him: "Yer all right, old feller! Sign!"

The Helmet of Navarre by Bertha Runkle

Author of "THE TRUTH ABOUT TOLNA."

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Felix Broux, page of the Duc de St. Quentin, comes to Paris to join his master. It is in the year 1593, when Paris is in the hands of the "League," headed by the Duke of Mayenne. Henry, King of Navarre, heir to the throne of France, is besieging the city. He is a Huguenot (Protestant), and as such cannot become King of a Catholic country. St. Quentin, though an avowed friend of Navarre, has ventured into Paris and taken up his headquarters there. Lucas, a secret spy of the League, becomes St. Quentin's secretary with a view to assassinating him. In pursuance of this plan Lucas and Gervais de Grammont, St. Quentin's cousin, dupe Count Etienne de la Mar, St. Quentin's son, into becoming their catspaw. Felix intervenes, and by revealing the plot prevents Etienne from unwittingly slaying his father. Etienne meets Lucas and Grammont in a courtyard and fights them. Etienne disables Grammont, but is wounded. Felix, snatching up a sword, continues the duel with Lucas.

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CHAPTER X.

Lucas and "Le Gaucher."

(Continued.)

I COULD handle a sword as well as the next one, M. le Duc had taught me in his idle days at St. Quentin. It served me well now, and him too.

The light was fading in the narrow court. Our blades shone white in the twilight as the weapons clashed in and out. I saw, without looking, Grammont leaning against the wall, his gory face ashen and Yeux-gris watching me with all his soul, now and then shouting a word of advice.

I had had good training, and I fought for all there was in me. Yet I was a boy not come to my full strength, and Lucas was more than my match. He drove me back further and further toward the house wall. Of a sudden I slipped in a smear of blood ('tis no lying excuse; I did slip) and lost my guard. He ran his blade into my shoulder, as he had done with Yeux-gris.

He would likely have finished me had not a cry from Grammont shaken him.

"The duke!"

In truth a deepening noise of hoofs and shouts came down the alley from the street.

Lucas looked at me, who had regained my guard and stood, little hurt, between him and M. le Comte. He could not push past me into the house and so through to the other street. He made for the alley, crying out:

"Au revoir, messieurs! We shall meet again."

Grammont seized him.

"Help me, Lucas, for the love of Christ! Don't leave me, Lucas!"

Lucas beat him off with the sword.

"Every man for himself!" he cried, and sprang down the alley.

"It is not the duke," I said to Yeux-gris. "It is most likely the watch." I paled at the thought, for the watch was the League's and Lucas by all signs the League's tool. It might go hard with us if captured. "Go through the house, M. le Comte," I cried. "Quick, if you love your life! I'll keep them at the alley's mouth as long as I can."

Not waiting for his answer I rushed down the passage. At the end of it I ran against Lucas, who in his turn had bowled into Vigo.

CHAPTER XI.

Vigo.

I KNEW of old that it was easier to catch a weasel asleep than Vigo absent where he was needed; yet I did not expect to meet him in the alley. Monsieur, then, had changed his mind.

"Well caught!" cried Vigo, winding his arms round Lucas, who was struggling furiously for liberty. "Here, Maurice, Jules, I have number one. Ah, you young sinner! with your crew again? I thought as much. Tie the knots hard, boys. Better be quiet, you snake; you can't get away."

Lucas seemed to make up his mind to this, for he quieted down directly.

"So the game is up," he said pleasantly. "I had hoped to be gone before you arrived, dear Vigo."

We had both been deprived promptly of our swords and Lucas's wrists were roped together, but my only bond was Vigo's hand on my arm.

"Where are the others?" he demanded. "No tricks now."

"Here," I said, and led the way down the passage. Maurice and Jules, with their prisoner, pressed after us, and half a dozen of the duke's guard after them. The rest stayed without to mind the horses and keep off the gathering crowd.

One of the men had a torch which lighted the red pavement. Vigo saw this first.

"Morbleu! is it a shambles?"

"That is wine," I said.

"They spilled wine for effect, they spilled so little blood!" Thus Lucas, speaking with as cool deviltry as if he still commanded the situation. Vigo could not know what he meant, but he asked no questions; instead bade Lucas hold his tongue.

"I am dumb," Lucas rejoined with a mock meekness more insolent than insolence. But we paid it no heed, for M. le Comte came forward out of the shadows. He held his head well up, but his face was white above his crimsoned doublet.

"M. Etienne! Are you hurt?" shouted Vigo.

"No, but he is." M. le Comte stepped aside to show us Grammont leaning against the wall.

"Ah!" cried Vigo triumphantly. He and two of the men rushed at Gervais.

"You would not take me so easily but for a cursed knife in my back," Grammont muttered thickly. "For the love of heaven, Vigo, draw it out."

With amazement Vigo perceived the knife.

"Who did it?"

"I."

"You, Felix? In the back?" Vigo looked at me as if to demand again which side I was on.

"He lay on me, throttling me," I explained. "I stabbed any way I could."

"I trow you are a dead man," Vigo told Grammont. "Natheless, here comes the knife."

It came, with a great cry from the victim. He fell back against Vigo's man, clapping his hand to his side.

"I am done for," he gasped faintly.

"That is well," said Vigo, carefully wiping off the knife.

"You is the scoundrel," Grammont gasped, pointing to Lucas.

"He will die a worse death than you," said Vigo.

Grammont looked from the one to the other of us, the sullen rage in his face fading to a puzzled helplessness. He said fretfully:

"Which—which is Etienne?"

He could no longer see us plain. M. le Comte came forward silently. Grammont struggled for breath in a way pitiable to see. I put my arm about him and helped the guardsman to hold him straighter. He reached out his hand and caught at M. le Comte's sleeve.

"Etienne—Etienne—pardon. It was wrong toward you—but I never had the pistoles. He called me thief—the duke. I beseech—your—pardon."

M. le Comte was silent.

"It was all Lucas—Lucas did it," Grammont muttered with stiffening lips. "I am sorry for—it. I am dying—I cannot die—without a chance. Say you—for—give"——

Still M. le Comte held back, silent. Treachery was no less treachery though Grammont was dying. All the more that they were cousins, bedfellows, was the injury great to forgive. M. le Comte said nothing.

"Well caught!" cried Vigo.

How Grammont found the strength only God knows, who haply in His goodness gave him a last chance of mercy. Suddenly he straightened his sinking body, started from our hold and tottered toward his cousin, both hands outstretched in appeal.

M. le Comte's face was set like a flint. The dying man faltered forward. Then M. Etienne, never changing his countenance, slowly, half reluctantly, like a man in a dream, held out his hand.

But the old comrades, estranged by traitory, were never to clasp again. As he reached M. le Comte Grammont fell at his feet.

"He was a strong man," said Vigo. He turned Grammont's face up and added the word, "Dead!" Vigo adored the Duke of St. Quentin. Otherwise he had no emotions.

But I was not case-hardened. And I—I myself—had slain this man, who had died slowly and in great pain. Vigo's voice sounded to me far off as he said bluntly:

"M. le Comte, I make you my prisoner."

"No, by heaven!" cried M. Etienne in a vibrating voice that brought me back to reality; "no, Vigo! I am no murderer. Things may look black against me, but I am innocent. You have one villain at your feet and one a prisoner, but I am not a third! I am a St. Quentin; I do not plot against my father. I was to aid Grammont to set on Lucas, who would not answer a challenge. I have been tricked. Gervais asked my forgiveness—you heard him. Their dupe, yes; accomplice I was not. Never have I lifted my hand against my father, nor would I, whatever came. That I swear. Never have I laid eyes on Lucas since I left monsieur's presence, till now when he came out of that door side by side with Grammont. Whatever the plot I knew naught of it. I am a St. Quentin—no parricide!"

The ringing voice ceased and M. le Comte stood silent, with haggard eyes on Vigo. Had he been prisoner at the bar of judgment he could not have waited in greater anxiety. For Vigo, the yeoman and servant, never minced words to any man nor swerved from the stark truth.

I burned to seize Vigo's arm, to spur him on to speech. Of course he believed M. Etienne; how dared he make his master wait for the assurance? On his knees he should be imploring M. le Comte's pardon.

But no thought of humbling himself troubled Vigo. Nor did he pronounce judgment, but merely said:

"M. le Comte will go home with me now. To-morrow he can tell his story to my master."

"I will tell it before this hour is out!"

"No, M. le Duc has left Paris. But it matters not, M. Etienne. Monsieur suspects nothing against you. Felix kept your name from him. And by the time I had screwed it out of Martin monsieur was gone."

"Gone out of Paris?" M. Etienne echoed blankly. To his eagerness it was as if M. le Duc were out of France.

"Aye. He meant to go to-night—monsieur, Lucas and I. But when monsieur learned of this plot he swore he'd go in open day. 'If the League must kill me,' says he, 'they can do it in daylight, with all Paris watching.' That's monsieur!"

At this I understood how Vigo came to be in the Rue Coupejarrets. Monsieur in his distress and anxiety to be gone from that unhappy house had forgotten the spy. Left to his own devices, the equerry, struck with suspicion at Lucas's absence, laid instant hands on Martin the clerk, with whom Lucas, disliked in the household, had had some intimacy. It had not occurred to Vigo that M. le Comte if guilty should be spared. At once he had sounded boots and saddles.

"I will return with you, Vigo," M. le Comte said. "Does the meanest lackey in my father's house call me parricide I must meet the charge. My father and I have differed, but if we are no longer friends we are still noblemen. I could never plot his murder, nor could he for one moment believe it of me."

I, guilty wretch, quailed. To take a flogging were easier than to confess to him the truth. But I conceived I must.

"Monsieur," I said, "I told M. le Duc you were guilty. I went back a second time and told him."

"And he?" cried M. Etienne.

"Yes, monsieur, he did believe it."

"Morbleu! that cannot be true," Vigo cried, "for when I saw him he gave no sign."

"It is true. But he would not have M. le Comte touched. He said he could not move in the matter; he could not punish his own kin."

M. le Comte's face blazed as he cried out:

"Vastly magnanimous! I thank him not. I'll none of his mercy. I expected his faith."

"You had no claim to it, M. le Comte."

"Vigo!" cried the young noble, "you are insolent, sirrah!"

"I cry monsieur's pardon."

He was quite respectful and quite unabashed. He had meant no insolence. But M. Etienne had dared criticise the duke, and that Vigo did not allow.

M. Etienne glared at him in speechless wrath. It would have liked him well to bring this contumelious varlet to his knees. But how? It was a byword that Vigo minded no man's ire but the duke's. The King of France could not dash him.

Vigo went on:

"It seems I have exceeded my duty, monsieur, in coming here. Yet it turns out for the best, since Lucas is caught and M. de Grammont dead and you cleared of suspicion."

"What!" Yeux-gris cried. "What! you call me cleared!"

Vigo looked at him in surprise.

"You said you were innocent, M. le Comte."

M. le Comte stared, without a word to answer. The equerry, all unaware of having said anything unexpected, turned to the guardsman Maurice:

"Well, is Lucas trussed? Have you searched him?"

Maurice displayed a poniard and a handful of small coins for sole booty, but Jules made haste to announce: "He has something else, though—a paper sewed up in his doublet. Shall I rip it out, M. Vigo?"

With Lucas's own knife the grinning Jules slashed his doublet from throat to thigh to extract a folded paper the size of your palm. Vigo pondered the superscription slowly, not much at home with the work of a quill save those that winged arrows. M. Etienne, coming forward, with a sharp exclamation snatched the packet.

"How came you by my letter?" he demanded of Lucas.

"M. le Comte was pleased to consign it for delivery to Martin."

"What purpose had you with it?"

"Rest assured, dear monsieur, I had a purpose."

The questions were stormily vehement, the answers so gentle as to be fairly caressing. It was waste of time and dignity to parley with the scoundrel till one could back one's queries with the boot. But M. Etienne's passion knew no waiting. Thrusting the letter into his breast ere I, who had edged up to him, could catch a glimpse of its address, he cried upon Lucas:

"Speak! You were ready enough to jeer at me for a dupe. Tell me what you would do with your dupe. You dared not open the plot to me—you did me the honor to know I would not kill my father. Then why use me blindfold? An awkward game, Lucas."

Lucas disagreed as politely as if exchanging pleasantries in a salon.

"A dexterous game, M. le Comte. Your best friends deemed you guilty. What would your enemies have said?"

"Ah-h," breathed M. Etienne.

"It dawns on you, monsieur? You are marvellous thick-witted, yet surely you must perceive. We had a dozen fellows ready to swear that your hand killed monsieur."

"You would kill me for my father's murder?"

"Ma foi, no!" cried Lucas airily. "Never in the world! We should have let you live, in the knowledge that whenever you displeased us we could send you to the gallows."

M. le Comte, silent, stared at him with wild eyes, like one who looks into the open roof of hell. Lucas fell to laughing.

"What! hang you and let our cousin Valere succeed? Mon dieu, no! M. Valere is a man!"

With a blow the guardsman struck the words and the laughter from his lips. But I, who no more than Lucas knew how to hold my tongue, thought I saw a better way to punish this brazen knave. I cried out:

"You are the dupe, Lucas! Aye, and coward to boot, fleeing here from—nothing. I knew naught against you—you saw that. To slip out and warn Martin before Vigo got a chance at him—that was all you had to do. Yet you never thought of that, but rushed away here, leaving Martin to betray you. Had you stuck to your post you had been now on the road to St. Denis instead of the road to the Greve! Fool! fool! fool!"

He winced. He had not been ashamed to betray his benefactor, to bite the hand that fed him, to desert a wounded comrade; but he was ashamed to confront his own blunder. I had the satisfaction of pricking, not his conscience, for he had none, but his pride.

"I had to warn Grammont off," he retorted. "Could I believe St. Quentin such a lack-wit as to forgive these two because they were his kin? You did better than you knew when you shut the door on me. You tricked me, you marplot, you sneak! How came you into the coil?"

(To Be Continued.)